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ABSTRACT

This monograph focuses on various approaches toward disciplining antisocial behavior. The author gives evidence to the failure of the widely used stimulus-response approach (i.e., punishing people when they are bad and rewarding them when they are good), and suggests how a new approach might be more successful in solving problems of crime and violence. This new disciplinary approach is based on behavior control perception psychology. The basic premise of this psychology is that people are internally motivated: that is, that people reorganize and redirect their behavior according to internal and individual perceptions of reality. These perceptions and, consequently, behaviors based on the perceptions, are constantly changing as people try to make them coincide with the image of the world they carry in their minds. Several examples are presented of case studies in which discipline based on behavior control perception psychology was used to solve altercations in the classroom. In one case, a teacher chatted with an unruly student outside of class regarding his disrespectful classroom behavior. She did not confront him in the class because she felt that his antisocial behavior was really intended as a means of gaining stature among his peers and would very likely increase if she publicly humiliated him. The conclusion is that discipline based on behavior control perception psychology can help individuals stop dissipating energy and retain more of the strength they need to compromise, negotiate, and confirm their own and others' needs. A major implication of this psychology is that individuals do not behave in an antisocial manner (and consequently, do not require discipline) when they feel that their needs are being met. (DB)

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DISCIPLINE: THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL AND SOCIETY.

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1.

While her class watched, a teacher in Los Angeles was forced at gunpoint to undress and then was sexually assaulted. When her assailant left fifteen minutes later, he took her clothes as well as her purse. Her students covered her with their sweaters and jackets. (13:1)

A high school teacher, sitting at her desk grading papers, suffered an emotional breakdown after two of her students tossed lighted matches into her hair, setting it afire. (13:1)

Plato once said the school is a mirror of the society in which it exists. This seems to be as true in our time as it was in Plato's: Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation show 1.3 million cases of violent crime occurred in the United States last year. (15:10) Every twenty-four minutes a murder is committed somewhere in the United States. Every ten seconds a house is burglarized. Every seven minutes a woman is raped. (1:16) The curse of violent crime is rampant not only in the ghettos of depressed cities, where it has always been a malignant force, but everywhere -- in urban areas, in suburbs, and peaceful countrysides. (10:16)

The Stimulus-Response Approach to Discipline.

Our way of attempting to solve problems such as these has been to invoke a "common sense" approach -- to do things to individuals to get them to behave -- to punish them when they are "bad" and to reward them when they are "good." (Cf. 2:2 and 6:183-225) This psychology is known as Stimulus-Response psychology by professional educators and psychologists. The difficulty with the "common sense" approach, Stimulus-Response psychology, is that we have reached a point of arrestment with respect to it. (6:183-225) We continue to use it over and over again even though it does not work, especially so with respect to solving problems of violence in the schools and crime in the society.

Stimulus-Response psychology is indeed widely held. It has been so ever since René Descartes (3:passim) first presented it three hundred years ago. It became even more so when John Broadus Watson (16:passim) early in the 1900s, following an example from physics, stated that we could, by studying the effects of controlled objective stimuli on the objectively observed actions of animals and people, derive laws of behavior, generalizations from many individual observations, which could then be used to predict the behavior that would follow from any stimulus. On this basis, most teachers, mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, bosses,

ministers, and people in general, believe that we should be as specific as possible in designing stimuli to bring about specific behavioral changes in others. Because this stimulus-response way of thinking is so widely held and because so much harm is done to individuals by those who try to force them to behave "their" way, it is worthwhile to explain why this common belief is not correct. (4:passim)

The main reason stimulus-response psychology is unsound is that we are internally, not externally, motivated. Despite what most people believe, we cannot coerce individuals either with punishment or reward to get them willingly to do whatever goes against what they believe they need. For example, we now have more than one million children and youth in America who do not read, despite much good instruction, because reading right now does not fulfill their needs. Just because we think reading is good for everyone, does not change the fact that right now these children and youth do not read, mostly because they do not want to do so. As long as they do not want to do so, no one, no matter how expert or well-intentioned, will teach them. This point of view is inherent in Behavior Control Perception Psychology, which contrasts sharply with the commonly held external, mechanical, stimulus-response behavior psychology.

The Behavior Control Perception Approach to Discipline.

Behavior Control Perception Psychology was founded by Dr. William T. Powers (11) during the period from 1960-1973. As Dr. Powers himself states, it is a long way through this theory, both in words and in new concepts. After studying Dr. Powers' theory for a long time, Dr. William Glasser (4) asked Dr. Powers if he would work with him to write the book entitled Stations of the Mind for use by the layman. With the help of Dr. Glasser and Dr. Powers I should like to identify some of the highlights of Behavior Control Perception Psychology for the purpose of explaining a new approach to discipline, a now approach to the problem of violence in the schools and crime in the society.

Contrary to Watson (16), Skinner (12), and the neobehaviorists (6:183-225) who state that the stimulus defines the response, Behavior Control Perception Psychology states in effect that the response defines the stimulus. "Behavior," says Dr. Powers, "is the process by which organisms control their input sensory data. For human beings, behavior is the control of perception." (11:xi)

In these terms, man is driven by powerful internal forces that move him not only to survive, but move him toward belonging, worthwhileness, fun, freedom, and so on. For these and perhaps other basic needs, he constructs a complex, unique personal world. His brain acts as the control system that deals with the real world to try to control it, so that it comes as close as possible to his personal world. What happens in the real world is of little or no significance to man unless it relates to what is already inside him in his personal world.

The brain controls for input or for what is senses. All brain control systems, like a thermostat, have sensors that provide accurate sensing capability. Man has the ability to sense light, sound, odor, flavor, touch, heat, cold, and pain. He has sensors that provide much information that goes into his brain, information that is called input.

When there is a difference between what man wants to sense and what he does sense, that difference generates a signal that activates his behavior. Man has a wide variety of outputs or behaviors. When he doesn't get the input for which he is controlling he tries one behavior after another. An input control system uses all the outputs it has available, and the more it has, the better it is at controlling for what it wants.

This is not what most professional and lay persons believe. Most, especially the behaviorists, believe they control for output, not input. In terms of stimulus-response theory they believe they can do things to individuals to get them to behave differently. They ignore, or try to ignore, that man is internally motivated.

When man wants anything, when his brain control system is controlling for anything, it does so by sending that perception to an active comparing station. There his perception of what he wants from his internal world is compared with whatever perceptions are coming through his senses, his input systems, from the external world.

The perception system contains all the sensory receptors, but it does much more than sense. It also interprets what man senses, from simple to complex, through at least ten orders -- 1. Intensity, 2. Sensation, 3. Configuration, 4. Transition, 5. Sequence, 6. Relationship, 7. Program, 8. Principles, 9. System Concepts, 10. Universal Oneness -- Meditation. (4:89-115, Cf. 11:82-230).

First-Order Perceptions -- Intensity. At the first-order perception, identified as intensity, all we perceive is that something is there that is different from what had been there before. This simple signal is not only our direct contact with the outside world, it is in fact our

only contact with the outside world.

Second-Order Perceptions -- Sensation. The second-order perception, sensation, is totally within our brain. First-order perceptions are quickly transformed by our brain into a higher order to make the world more meaningful to us, so we can more easily meet our needs. This meaning is our meaning. It is personal. It is in our head. The most common second-order perceptions are emotions.

Third-Order Perceptions -- Configurations. Third-order perceptions, configurations, are mixtures of itensities and sensations put together by the cortex so that they appear to be something definite -- letters put together are words, sounds put together are language, notes put together are music, and so on. Things have a name and a shape. They can be distinguished from each other -- grouped and classified.

Fourth-Order Perceptions -- Control of Transitions. Fourth-Order Perceptions are configurations presented in slightly different positions in rapid sequence -- configurations in the process of becoming something else. The doppler effect is a fourth-order perception.

Fifth-Order Perceptions -- Control of Sequence. Fifth-Order Perceptions involve control of sequence. We control sequence in walking, talking, keeping time, using a calendar, and so on.

Sixth-Order Perceptions -- Control of Relationships. Sixth-Order Perceptions involve control of relationships. We manipulate independent variables to bring about certain dependent variables.

Seventh-Order Perceptions -- Program Control. Program control involves the use of all previous levels of perception, especially configuration, transition, sequence, and relationship in implementing a course of action, a program of action, for example, in obtaining an academic degree, or traveling from one city to another.

Eighth-Order Perceptions -- Control of Principles. Much of what we perceive and control is within the first seven orders. What makes us uniquely human is our ability to perceive beyond the seventh order. Eighth-order perceptions involve principles, morality, responsibility, and values, the fundamental perceptions we have discovered we must control in order to belong or to get along with each other.

Ninth-Order Perceptions -- Control of Systems Concepts. By way of Ninth-Order Perceptions we sometimes perceive a conceptual system to be greater

than issues or individuals. An example of this might be loyalty to one's country, or university, or team.

Tenth-Order Perceptions -- Universal Oneness -- Meditation. The Tenth-Order Perception is controlling successfully for one special idea -- universal oneness, in which all the perceptions of the world seem to be unified into one. Dr. Glasser believes "our reorganization system never turns off completely, and when it alone is operating, as it may during deep, peaceful, no-error meditation, we experience it as a creative sense of oneness with ourselves and the universe which we call transcendent."

In a comparing station in his brain, man is constantly comparing what is coming in with some of his built-in needs. When what is coming in does not compare very well, we have what is called an uncontrolled perception, a perceptual error which is the difference between the reference perception and the input. A perceptual error always generates a signal called an error signal that activates the behavioral system to eliminate the error. The behavior is made up of all that man thinks, does, and feels. This input-control system functioning is called Behavior Control Perception theory, BCP, in contrast to Stimulus-Response theory, S-R.

Man has a three-component behavioral system to provide him with the behaviors he uses to satisfy his needs, one major system -- reorganization and redirection, and one subsystem -- new information.

The reorganization system is a random, illogical, nonlearning, but highly energetic system that produces behavior until the perceptual error is reduced or eliminated so that reorganization is no longer needed.

Soon after birth man develops the second component of his behavioral system -- redirection. Unlike reorganization, redirection is a learning system. It becomes a storehouse of learned behaviors and strategies that reduce or eliminate perceptual error.

The third component of man's behavioral system -- the new information system -- is used to deal with small perceptual errors. It simply eliminates transient errors with new information.

Summary.

In summary, then, the theory of Behavior Control Perception, BCP, postulates the following:

Man always lives in two worlds -- (a) his personal world, over which, once he learns it is his personal world, he has much control, and (b) something called the real world, over which he has much less control.

All man ever knows of the real or external or outside world is the energy that comes from the world and strikes the sensory receptors of his perceptual system. Everything else that man claims is the real world is in fact his own perceptions of that world, perceptions he constantly tries to change so that they coincide with the world in his head.

Discipline.

So far as discipline, the solving of problems of violence in school and society, is concerned we dissipate much of our strength by attempting to control others, strength that we urgently need to compromise and negotiate, to confirm our own needs as well as the needs of others. (4:143)

We live only a small fraction of our lives in the first-order outside world. Most of our lives are lived in a higher-order, unique, personal world that we create in our head from our needs. For all practical purposes this world in our head is the only world we will ever know. We are always aware of this world, but we think it is the real world. As Dr. Glasser points out, because our false assumption that our world is the real world can be so devastating, we need to learn as much as we can how to avoid making this almost universal mistake. We must learn the difficult lesson that we always live in two worlds -- (a) our internal world, over which, once we learn it is our world, we have a great deal of control, and (b) the external world, something out there called the real world, over which we have much less control. (4:118)

Throughout history, school and society have persistently tried to reduce conflict and to keep order by attempting to control by punishment those who place their personal needs above the needs of others. Basically,

those in positions of authority have tried to control others to follow seventh order programs without eighth order questioning of whether or not these programs are good for them. Our records of vandalism in the school and violence in the society attest to the failure of this approach and our desperate need to reexamine it.

This reexamination might well begin with a clarification of important terms in Behavior Control Perception Psychology. (a) Conflict occurs when we try at the same time to control for two or more incompatible reference levels -- for example, being torn between being free and being obedient. (b) Control (or domination) is a matter of trying to force ourselves or others to do what we or they do not want to do. (c) Criticism occurs when we criticize ourselves, someone criticizes us or we criticize someone. Eventually control (domination) or criticism leads to conflict. If the conflict is not resolved it can cause irreparable harm and continue indefinitely.

Conflict at a high order of perception is the most difficult situation our control system has to face. This is so because no matter which way we turn there is perceptual error -- our efforts to redirect or reorganize our perceptions are aimed at two or more incompatible reference levels, struggling to move in two opposite directions at the same time.

In these terms it is not possible to control another person without causing conflict in that person. "But," as Dr. Glasser points out, "that doesn't stop us from trying. Husbands attempt to control wives, and wives husbands, children parents, parents children, big children little children, teachers students, bosses workers, coaches athletes -- the list is endless." (4:143) "We are," says Dr. Glasser, "in for a lot of misery if we don't realize that people were not put on this earth to satisfy our needs. If we try too hard to force others to live in our world, because we think it is the real world, we are doomed to disappointment." (4:124)

For example, in Los Angeles, California, a husky male high school teacher caught a student trying to rape a female teacher and turned him over to the police. Three of the would-be rapist's friends then kicked the male teacher unconscious, knocking out several of his teeth, giving him a severe concussion and perforating an eardrum.

As Dr. Glasser (4:146) points out, "Punishment is still the most widely used and advocated way to control others, probably because . . . there is never any doubt that punishment will produce perceptual error, pain, and almost always a change in behavior. But most punishment produces

only short-term control. There is no good evidence that punishment will control people to do what you want them to do over a long period of time, because when you hurt people, you always increase their perceptual error. Since pain is generally not considered desirable, in most cases you provoke an immediate conflict between what the person would like to do and the fact that if he does it he will be hurt. As in all serious conflicts, frantic redirection and occasional reorganization occur, but there is no reason to believe that it will be the kind of redirection or reorganization the punisher desires."

In our example, for instance, the female teacher berates the student in front of his class for the poor work he is doing. He responds violently by molesting her. He and his friends are then punished even more severely by a judge who sends them to jail, puts them on probation, and warns them they will be punished even more severely for their next offense. To resolve the conflict the students move to another order of perception and vandalize the school. At this order of perception the students believe they are solving the problem by getting rid of the school.

"Much vandalism and senseless destruction," says Dr. Glasser (4:147) is redirection against the establishment. Basically, what we are saying is that when you attempt arbitrarily to control yourself or others you are on chancy ground. It may work if it is what you or they want, but it is rare that we or others want what we try to force ourselves or them to do. With ourselves or with others, compromise and negotiation are the only reasonable courses of action."

A democratic society provides many alternative ways for us to fulfill our needs. For this reason we have a wide diversity of internal worlds, thus making it difficult for us to find the common ground we have with others. Be that as it may, let us in terms of Behavior Control Perception Psychology attempt to reconstruct our example of the confrontations of the teachers and the students:

The female teacher had a comparing station open in which she had a worthwhile reference level to the effect that she wanted all her students to learn. The male teacher likewise had a comparing station open in which he had a worthwhile reference level to the effect that law and order be maintained in the school. Each of the students, on the other hand, had a comparing station open for status among peers, but not for academic competence or law and order in the school. The high-error perceptions of the teachers generated error signals in both of them that caused them to use punishment as a control. The high-error perceptions of the students generated error signals that also caused them to use punishment as a control.

9.

Let us supppose the female teacher, by using Behavior Control Perception Psychology, quite understandably suspects the student is not controlling for academic competence, but rather for status based on the general need to feel worthwhile. Instead of berating the student in the presence of his peers, she decides to chat with him outside of class in a quiet, confidential, friendly, interested, respectful manner. As both teacher and student control for care and concern -- individual worth -- they listen to each other because what is said comes to an active comparing station of each person. In this situation both share their thoughts without losing face -- the sense of self worth. The development of new interests begins with the present interests of the individual, no matter what those new interests or present interests are. Both teacher and student begin to control for each other's thoughts, with both opening comparing stations to process various suggestions that ensue, with both beginning to develop new reference levels for the learning involved. With this Behavior Control Perception approach the whole tragic situation that began with the Stimulus-Response approach could have been avoided.

Conclusion.

In conclusion our main point bears repeating: So far as discipline, the problems of violence in school and society, is concerned, we dissipate much of our strength by attempting to control others, strength that we urgently need to compromise and negotiate, to confirm our own needs as well as the needs of others.

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